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## IRISH SNAKES.

There is something bordering on the ridiculous in the very title of our essay, St. Patrick having not only extirpated "*the verment*" from *ould Ireland*, but also prohibited under severe pains and penalties, any again coming hither. Their expulsion has been handed down by tradition, and faithfully recorded in our annals in both verse and prose.

From this period, Ireland remained free from snakes, toads, and all other venomous creatures, a fact acknowledged by all authors, whether natives or strangers. Donat, bishop of Fesulæ, says, when noticing Ireland,

"No poison there infects, no scaly snakes"

Joceline, of Furnes, in his Life of St. Patrick, confirms this statement, and Sir James Ware says, "This island does not nourish any venomous creature," nor will they breed in it, though they were imported.

Even old Fynes Moryson, who cannot be accused of any partiality to the country, bears witness to its truth;—he says, "I may not omit the opinion commonly received, that the earth of Ireland will not suffer a snake or venomous beast to live." Modern authorities also furnish us with additional information on this subject. About 1797, a gentleman is said to have imported from England into Wexford, a number of vipers; but mark the result of his patriotic labours;—no sooner were they loose among our shamrocks and shining daisies, than they were as dead as a herring, before you could have said *Jack Robinson*.

We are sorry to record that the virtues of the good old times have passed away, as snakes are at this moment free denizens of the county of Down, and gamboling in its shrubberies and plantings,—aye, and within a few miles too of the place where the ashes of our saint are said to repose. The particulars regarding the introduction of these serpents, are as follows:—

In the summer of 1851, a gentleman by way of experiment, to ascertain whether snakes would survive in Ireland, brought from Scotland a few pair of what are usually called the Common Snake, (*coluber natrix*.) These he put into a plantation at Milecross, near Newtownards, where they soon from their number, gave evidence of becoming as fruitful as if they had been placed in South Carolina. About July 1852, some of these snakes were observed basking about the bottoms of the hedges where they had been placed, and one of them having crawled into an adjoining field, was killed by a blow of a stick. It was a female, full of eggs, and measured three feet three inches in length.

Up to this time the introduction of the snakes at Milecross had been only known to a few, who concluded that they had perished long since, but the news of the astounding fact, that they were not only alive, but had also propagated their kind, becoming known, it excited the utmost alarm. It was immediately reported that they were *Rattle-snakes*, and that their number were increased to several thousands; some old women even declared that they had heard the noise of their *Rattles*, above a mile from where the defunct snake had been slain; and to complete the alarm, their powers of fascination were said to be such, that birds were seen dropping into their mouths, as they attempted to fly over the trees where these monsters lay.

In the mean time the report of an enormous *Rattle-snake* having been killed near Newtownards reached Belfast, and presently all the *virtuosi* of that town, from the puny naturalist, to the executioner of butterflies and moths, were seen hastening in the direction of Milecross, anxiously inquiring for the great serpent, which rumour had now enlarged to the length of ten feet and a half. To the great joy of these humble disciples of Linnæus, the dead snake was at length discovered, but shrivelled like a dried eel-skin. It was, however, considered a very valuable prize, and was conveyed with all possible care and despatch to Belfast, and deposited in its Museum. We have only to add that the alarm soon subsided in the county of Down, and that the remaining snakes still peaceably repose among the shrubberies and mosses of Milecross.

Belfast.

W. W.

## CROMWELL OUTWITTED.

Castlemagner, in the county of Cork, belonged to Richard Magner; he was agent for the Irish inhabitants of Orrery and Kilmore. When Cromwell was at Clonmel, he went to see him; but being represented as a troublesome person, who had been active in the rebellion, Cromwell sent him with a letter to Colonel Phare, the governor of Cork, in which was an order to execute the bearer. Magner, who suspected foul play, had scarce left Clonmel when he opened the letter, read it, and re-sealing it, instead of proceeding to Cork, turned off to Malloy, and delivered it to the officer who commanded there, with directions as from Cromwell, for him to deliver it to Colonel Phare. This officer had often preyed upon Magner's lands, for which he was resolved to be revenged. The officer suspecting no deceit, went with the letter, which greatly amazed the governor, who knew him; and immediately sent an express to Cromwell for further directions, who, being much chagrined to be so treated, sent orders to have the officer released, and to apprehend Magner, but he had taken care to get out of his reach.

## ABSENTEES.

The following statement occurs in Whelshaw and Walshe's History of Dublin;—"The absentees have been from the earliest times a constant theme of complaint, as the prime cause of the unprosperous state of the country. So early as the year 1568, an ordinance of the 42d of Edward the Third states, "*Les ditz mals* (the conduct of the absentees) *avencent en perdition la dite terre*. In 1601, a writer of "*Remarks on the Affairs of England and Ireland*," avers, that the amount of drainage of wealth by absentees in various ways, was £136,018 per annum. In 1729, a work ascribed to Thomas Prior contains a list of the then absentees, and the money they drew from the kingdom in various ways, amounted annually to £627,799. Arthur Young, in 1779, affirms it to have been £732,200; but an alphabetical list of names and particulars published in 1782, makes it amount to the enormously increased sum of £2,225,212! To these non-residents from choice, are now to be added those who are necessarily so, in attending parliamentary duties, and the whole sum now abstracted from Ireland and spent elsewhere is fairly estimated at £5,000,000."

## TO A PRIMROSE IN THE SCALP, COUNTY OF DUBLIN.

Thou darling gem of this dear isle,  
Who, from the grey rock's sunny cove,  
Shed'st on my path thy dewy smile,  
As through the rifted Scalp I rove.  
Upon the tearful, tender green,  
Of matchless hue, in matchless hour,  
Far slanting through the deep ravine  
The early sun-beams kiss thy bower.  
Sweet star of hope! whose glow-worm ray,  
Thro' emerald moss and weeping fern,  
Tells to my anxious heart a day  
Of spring and joy will yet return.  
I bless thee for thy lovely light—  
I hail thee for thy glad surprise—  
I pray, so pure, serene, and bright,  
The star of Erin's peace may rise.  
Oh! be thou herald of the dawn,  
When generous hearts no longer bleed,  
And gallant, gifted spirits scorn  
The vengeance well their country's meed.  
I'll love thee ever, darling flower,  
And deep within my soul shall rest  
The rugged pass, the dewy hour,  
When I beheld thee, and was blest.

F. M.

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